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ABSTRACT
This social studies unit uses conflicting eyewitness and secondary accounts o... what happened in Lexington, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775, to illustrate t... nature and methods of history and to encourage the student to function as an historian. Sections of the unit (1) introduce problems faced by historians by focusing on documentary materials relative to the Lexington incident, (2) surv... the work of 19th- and 20th-century historians and textbook authors to illustra... the evolution in findings and opinions on the Lexington affair over 190 years (3) explore the philosophy of history by discussing the nature of "facts" and historical inquiry as well as the differing ways by which the historian, sci... and artist apprehend "reality." Included are excerpts from court records, fro... eyewitness and newspaper accounts of the Lexington incident, and from the wor... English and American historians from 1805 through 1965. [Not available in har... due to marginal legibility of original document.] (Author/JB)

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EXPERIMENTAL MATERIAL
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TEACHER'S MANUAL

WHAT HAPPENED ON LEXINGTON GREEN:

AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND METHODS OF HISTORY

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TE 499 931

This material has been produced
by the
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NOTE TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

This unit was prepared by the Committee on the Study of History, Amherst College, under contract with the United States Office of Education. It is one of a number of units prepared by the Amherst Project, and was designed to be used either in series with other units from the Project or independently, in conjunction with other materials. While the units were geared initially for college-preparatory students at the high school level, experiments with them by the Amherst Project suggest the adaptability of many of them, either wholly or in part, for a considerable range of age and ability levels, as well as in a number of different kinds of courses.

The units have been used experimentally in selected schools throughout the country, in a wide range of teaching/learning situations. The results of those experiments will be incorporated in the Final Report of the Project on Cooperative Research grant H-168, which will be distributed through ERIC.

Except in one respect, the unit reproduced here is the same as the experimental unit prepared and tried out by the Project. The single exception is the removal of excerpted articles which originally appeared elsewhere and are under copyright. While the Project received special permission from authors and publishers to use these materials in its experimental edition, the original copyright remains in force, and the Project cannot put such materials in the public domain. They have been replaced in the present edition by bracketed summaries, and full bibliographical references have been included in order that the reader may find the material in the original.

This unit was initially prepared in the summer of 1967

"It says so right on page 72, Mr. History Teacher, so I know it's true."

How many times a day is a scene similar to this enacted throughout the land? History is what is in the book. History is a list of names and dates. History is a host of hows and whys about dead people. Historians are the bloodless computers who roll out endless copy on what happened in the past. History is what is forgotten when the student turns to reality.

This unit asks the student to deal with three basic questions: what is history, what is reality, and what do historians do with--or to--history and reality? These are not easy questions. Nevertheless, this unit has been designed so that it can be used with a wide variety of grade levels and ability groupings and can be adapted to very different rates of student comprehension.

After stating the unit's key concerns in the Introduction Section I provides the student with documentary material of both a primary and secondary nature relative to what happened at Lexington, Massachusetts, on the morning of April 19, 1775. Section II surveys the work of representative nineteenth and twentieth century historians and textbook authors and presents the evolution of their findings on the Lexington affair. Section III digs more deeply into some of the abstract problems of the philosophy of history as raised by Sections I and II.

It is not assumed that every student must, or should, use all the Sections or sub-sections of this unit. It is structured so that a clear introduction to many of the problems faced by historians can be gained by proceeding through only Section I. Then, for those students who are more able and/or more highly motivated, Section II raises some of the problems faced by different generations of writers focusing on the same particular event. Section III is the most difficult of the three and will probably be used by few students "in toto." Teachers, however, may want to assign individual sub-sections (A, B, or C) in conjunction with work on Sections I or II. For example, the more abstract discussion of facts presented in III-A may well be assigned along with the raw material of Section I-A or I-B.

The focus of this unit, in terms of subject matter material, is deliberately narrow. These readings will not, then, serve as an introduction to a study of the Revolutionary Era, for the concentration is intended to be on the nature and methods of history. This unit, therefore, would probably be most valuable if used as an introduction to the year's work.

For a general rule of thumb, the following breakdown might be used in planning the use of this unit:

Introduction	1 day
Section I, A	1 day
Section I, B	1 day
Section I, C	1 day

Section II, B	1-2 days
Section II, B	1 day
Section III, A	1 day
Section III, B	1-2 days
Section III, C	1 day

Planning in this fashion, the unit would run from 1 to 2 weeks in length, depending upon how many Sections or sub-sections the teacher elects to use with a particular class.

INTRODUCTION

The four quotations in the Introduction present the student with different opinions or definitions of history. Many students may identify emotionally with Henry Ford without stopping to think what he meant or what might be the implications of living a life that ruled out past experience. A discussion of this might lead students to consider what they think the word "past" means, who should work with it (i.e., who are "historians"), and what values could lie in its study.

A comparison of the viewpoints expressed by van Loon and by Franklin should lead the student to ponder, in Becker's terms, just how much ". . . 'the present is the product of all the past' . . . [and] the past is the product of all the present."[1]

At this point, it might be very useful to have each student compose a succinct paragraph in which he presents his own definition of history, not necessarily an original one, and explain why he thinks it is a good definition. These could be used, subsequently, to help the teacher and the student try to decide whether any change of attitude takes place as a result of working with this unit.

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[1]Carl Becker, "What are Historical Facts," The Western Political Quarterly, VIII, 3 (Sept., 1955), 337.

SECTION I

THE LEXINGTON AFFAIR

Section I provides a representative sampling of the extant material, both primary and secondary,[2] that was contemporary to the Lexington affair. It is presented basically as raw data, with little or no explicit direction for the reader. The student, then, is asked to function as a historian--in the formal sense of the word--and, on the basis of the evidence available, explain what really happened at Lexington. It is expected that he will experience difficulty in reaching a clear-cut decision. Indeed, the emphasis should be placed not on choosing or creating a particular answer but on the methods for attaining and the justification of whatever position is finally taken.

In Part A the four documents chosen offer contradictory evidence as to the numbers involved on each side in the impending fracas. It is intended as a preliminary exercise, to give the student practice in comparing and evaluating historical evidence, and at the same time to raise the question of the nature of historical facts. There is considerable agreement in these documents as to who, when, and where, but the disagreement as to numbers should be very clear to the careful reader. Where, then, does the student go from here? Are these different people necessarily lying, or can he draw some more meaningful generalizations about the different types of documents involved, problems of individual perception, and the nature of evidence with which historians must work?

At this point, depending on the abilities of the student, it might be helpful to refer him to Section III, Part A, which pursues on a more abstract level the question of what is a fact.

The problems of the student will probably become intensified in Part B. These are all eye-witness accounts of the firing, and, in fact, six of the ten accounts were given as sworn testimony before Justices of the Peace. The physical locations and the frames of reference of the witnesses are all slightly different, and it is very important for the student to take note of such distinctions as he wrestles with the evidence presented in each account. For example, Thomas Fessenden (I-B,1) was in a nearby field; Simon Winship (I-B,3) was to the rear of the advance Britich party; and Nathaniel Mullekin (I-B,6) was on parade with the militia on the Commons. These men, therefore, had rather

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[2] In this unit, primary materials are those provided by eye-witnesses, within a reasonably short time after the occurrence of the event; secondary materials are those produced by individuals removed by time or space from the event. Thus, the deposition sworn by eye-witness Sylvanus Wood (I-A,3 and I-C,5) some 52 years after the Lexington affair, and the histories of Winston Churchill, are both considered to be evidence of a secondary nature.

pictures of the event. Which would be the more accurate? And certainly John Pitcairn (I-B,10) and John Parker (I-B,9), commanders of the opposing forces, though not too distant in physical proximity, would have "seen" the affair from very different points of view.

The material in Part C further complicates the problem. This provides evidence of a secondary nature, and the student will have to consider its advantages and disadvantages as compared with primary evidence. He will have to face a host of complexities: where did the Boston gentleman get his disturbingly different information *I-C,2); how many tricks does time play on human memories (I-C,4-6); just how objective, how disinterestedly honest an inquirer was Rev. Gordon (I-C,7); can "official" versions ever be considered as much more than propaganda for a particular person or group of persons (I-C,1,8,9)?

After completing Section I, the student should have come face to face with a number of significant problems and concepts related to the study of history. Among these may be:

- the problem of just what is "factual";
- the tricks that are played by physical and temporal locations and mental frames of reference;
- the differences between primary and secondary evidence;
- the problems which ensue from lack of evidence and the resulting uncertainties with which the historian has to cope.

Here it would probably be valuable to assign students to write a paper: "What Really Happened At Lexington?" It should be made clear that the emphasis is not to be on "what" but on "how do you know." Otherwise, most students will write their own narrative of the events with little or no explanation as to why they chose a particular set of "facts" out of the whole conflicting array.

SECTION II

HISTORIANS AND THE LEXINGTON AFFAIR

Now that the student has himself become somewhat expert on the controversies surrounding this particular historical event, he should be ready to examine the ways in which professional historians have handled it. Thus, in Section II, the emphasis is on the historiography of the Lexington Affair.

The fourteen readings in Part A, drawn from the works of representative British and American authors, are arranged in chronological order. Since this is a rather lengthy sub-section, it could easily be broken into a two-day assignment with nineteenth century authors (II-A,1-7) on the first day and twentieth century authors (II-A,8-14) on the second.

Two principal questions could be developed from these selections in Part A. First, what do these writers identify as the true story of Lexington? Secondly, after examining the work of these writers, what generalizations would you make as to what is history? From the reading the student can see that as time progressed the writings tended to be less passionate, less detailed, and more inclined to a neutralist position. Indeed, he might see that time, rather than nationality, has done the most to shape the views of historians on this matter. Hence, the student might very well conclude that "history" is not simply the compilation of certain facts, but also the process of that compilation; history is, then, a combination of what was and what the historian sees.

In Part B, the readings on Lexington are taken from school textbooks (II-B,1-8). Here the student has a chance to compare the texts to the supposedly more sophisticated works in the previous Section (II-A) and, also, to his own conclusions based on his work with the evidence in Section I. This provides another opportunity to consider the nature and the definition of history and the role of the historian. Such readings could encourage students to consider the nature and to question the validity of textbooks, and could also evoke a wider-ranging discussion on the study and learning of history in the schools.

It might be interesting, as a conclusion to this sub-section, to ask students to write their own "textbook treatment" of Lexington. Where their efforts differ substantially from those of most texts, a very worthwhile discussion could ensue.

SECTION III

EVERY MAN HIS OWN HISTORIAN?

Section III is intended to allow the student to pursue in greater depth several of the philosophical issues that could be raised in the discussion of Sections I and II. The readings are quite difficult, and there are but few specific directions for the reader. Even the best students, therefore, will need guidance from the teacher in working with this final section.

The basic question under consideration in all three subsections is "What is reality, and how can a historian hope to find out what it was?" In Part A the student is challenged to reach his own definition as to what is a fact. The dictionary definition (III-A,1) presents some fascinating contradictions, and Professor Dance interjects a new consideration as to the immutability even of historical dates (III-A,2). Both Walter Lippmann (III-A,3) and Carl Becker (III-A,4) provide the student with material which should help him to recognize the concept of a frame of reference and to consider to what degree "facts" are created as well as recorded.

For some students, the confrontation with such material could drive them toward a position of almost total relativism, leading to a disdain for history as an impracticable discipline. At such times, a discussion of the role of past experience--as possibly undertaken with the Introduction--should reintroduce a more balanced view of the value of the study of history.

In Part B, after reading the two physics experiments (III-B, 1-2), the student should be able to deduce certain things about the nature of working in a "scientific" discipline: the environment is controllable; a particular act, or experiment, can be repeated many times; because experiments can be repeated and the environment controlled, a great quantity of evidence can be amassed on the matter being studied; and the scientist can eventually predict what will happen in the controlled environment of a well-run experiment. The student can then move on to compare the work of the physicist to that of the sociologist (III-B,3), the novelist (III-B,4), and the poet (III-B,5). He should then be ready to comment on those factors which do or do not make history special, unique, as compared with these other disciplines.

The second matter that could be pursued in Part B is the question whether each of these fields--science, literature, history--contributes something distinctively its own to man's search for reality? Do practitioners of these fields actually function in about the same way? Does one group provide more insight into reality than the others? Or does each of these disciplines provide a particular way of reaching a particular segment of the totality of reality, each providing one piece of the puzzle?

By now, if, indeed, not well before, the student will probably be raising the question, "Well, what is reality, anyway?" The basic concern of Part C is what is reality, and how can the historian ever hope to find any part of it? In the excerpts by Professor Butterfield and Miss Tuchman (III-C, 1-2), it is suggested that the historian cannot function successfully as merely an objective recorder of factual material. The facts do not have a voice of their own, von Ranke and de Coulanges to the contrary. The historian must creatively impose an order upon them. What he strives to do, however, is to recreate them as they were, not to build a totally new wall with the old bricks. Hence, in the third reading (III-C,3), Butterfield warns against the "Whig," the overly creative imposer, the historian who distorts the past to suit the present.

The first three readings, then, raise the question of how one can creatively seek to recreate past realities. The last excerpt (III-C,4) is a classic discourse on what is reality, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave."

As a capstone to this unit, it might well be useful to ask the student to write a final paper with some such title as "History, Reality, and the Historian." It should then be interesting for both student and teacher to compare the ideas therein to those expressed more roughly in the paragraph written in response to the opening Introduction.

This is not an easy unit to teach. The readings are devised so as to raise questions. It is hoped that the teacher will then try to help each student to reach his own conclusions. A concensus may be achieved at different times, but the questions are intended to be genuinely open-ended. From the early problem of how many militiamen paraded on the Green to the final question as to what is reality, the student and the teacher are invited to work hand in hand in a search for answers to questions that would seem to have lacked definitive answers for hundreds of years. Is this not, however, in the final analysis, what education strives for--to help human beings to use, as best they can, their particular powers to pursue the elusive goals of happiness, beauty, and truth? The study of history, or of any honest intellectual discipline, should constantly provide new insights into both the present limitations and the future potentialities afforded by the human condition. Such insights should better enable man, in Faulkner's terms: "to endure . . . and prevail."[3]

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[3]William Faulkner, "Address Upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature," James B. Meriwether, ed., Essays, Speeches and Public Letters by William Faulkner (Random House, New York, 1965), 120.

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STUDENT'S MANUAL

WHAT HAPPENED ON LEXINGTON GREEN:

AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND METHODS OF HISTORY

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This material has been produced
by the
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INTRODUCTION

What is history, and what do historians do? These have long been controversial questions:

> History is only a confused heap of facts.
> (Lord Chesterton)[1]

> The history of the world is the record of a man in quest of his daily bread and butter.
> (H. W. van Loon)[2]

> Historians relate, not so much what is done, as what they would have believed.
> (Ben Franklin)[3]

> History is bunk.
> (Henry Ford)[4]

This unit is intended to provide such materials as should help the reader to grapple with these very basic questions. Answers are not supplied, and, in fact, it is doubtful if a concensus could be reached among any significant number of people as to what THE answers are. Hence, it is up to each individual to seek his own.

Because the questions are challenging, the materials are the same. The exerpts will demand very careful reading, and a very significant point may hang on quite subtle distinctions between documents.

When you have finished with this unit, you will have considered a representative sampling of much that has been written about the firing

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[1]H. L. Mencken, ed., A New Dictionary of Quotations (Knopf, New York, 1942), 536.

[2]Bruce Stevenson, ed., The Home Book of Quotations (Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1944), 899.

[3]Ibid., 901.

[4]H. L. Mencken, A New Dictionary of Quotations, 539.

of shots at Lexington, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775. Your increased knowledge may or may not make you any more confident of what the correct answer might be, but you should have done some hard thinking and tried to form some definite conclusions about the two key questions framed at the beginning of this introduction: what is history, and what do historians do?

SECTION I

THE LEXINGTON AFFAIR

A. Setting the Scene

On the eighteenth of April, 1775, General Thomas Gage, Commander of the British Occupation Force in Massachusetts Colony, issued supposedly secret orders to a select portion of his Boston-based troops. They were to steal out of town under the cover of night, march to the town of Concord, some sixteen miles west of Boston, and destroy the colonial military stores that had been gathered there. Despite all efforts at stealth, however, spying colonial eyes discovered these movements almost immediately. William Dawes, Paul Revere, and, later, Dr. Samuel Prescott, rode out ahead of the main body of British marchers, alarming the countryside of the enemy action.

As the British travelled the road between Charlestown and Lexington, gunshots, ringing bells, and fleeting figures made it clear that their movements had hardly gone undetected. Their advance party did, however, capture a number of the colonial scouts and couriers, among them Paul Revere. British troops arrived at Lexington, therefore, before the colonial Minutemen were fully informed of their numbers or prepared to deal with them.

The following statements come from a wide variety of historical sources, and in this respect the evidence is the same as that dealt with by any professional historian. On the basis of such material, what can be safely said about the scene at Lexington on the morning of April 19, 1775? What were the facts of that situation?

1. The Worcester, Massachusetts, newspaper, The Massachusetts Spy, presented its account of the events at Lexington some two weeks after the occurrence:[1]

ACCOUNT OF AN ATTACK ON THE INHABITANTS OF MASSA-
CHUSETTS BY THE BRITISH TROOPS, ACTING UNDER
THE ORDERS OF GENERAL GAGE, ON THE 19TH OF
APRIL, 1775.

Worcester, Massachusetts,
May 3, 1775.

. . . A few days before the battle, the Grenadier and Light-Infantry Companies were all drafted from the several Regiments in Boston, and put under the command of an Officer, and it was observed that most of the transports and other boats were put together, and fitted for immediate service. This manoeuvre gave rise to a suspicion that some formidable expedition was intended by the soldiery, but what or where, the inhabitants could not determine; however, the town-watches in Boston, Charlestown, Cambridge, &c., were ordered to look well to the landing places. About ten o'clock on the night of the 18th of April, the Troops in Boston were discovered to be on the move in a very secret manner, and it was found they were embarking in boats (which they privately brought to the place in the evening) at the bottom of the Common; expresses sat off immediately to alarm the country, that they might be on their guard. When the expresses got about a mile beyond Lexington, they were stopped by about fourteen officers on horseback, who came out of Boston in the afternoon of that day, and were seen lurking in by-places in the country till after dark. One of the expresses immediately fled, and was pursued two miles by an officer, who, when he had got up with him, presented a pistol, and told him he was a dead man if he did not stop; but he rode on until he came up to a house, when, stopping of a sudden, his horse threw him off. Having the presence of mind to halloo to the people in the house, "Turn out! turn out! I have got one of them," the officer immediately retreated as fast as he had pursued. The other express, after passing through a strict examination, by some means got clear.

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[1]Peter Force, ed., American Archives (Clarke and Force, Washington, 1839), Fourth Series, II, 437-438.

> The body of the Troops in the mean time, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Smith, had crossed the river, and landed at Phipps's farm. They immediately, to the number of one thousand, proceeded to Lexington, six miles below Concord, with great silence. A Company of Militia, of about eighty men, mustered near the meeting-house; the Troops came in sight of them just before sunrise. . . .

2. Thomas Willard gave the following sworn testimony before three of the Justices of Peace of Middlesex County, Massachusetts:[2]

Lexington, April 23, 1775.

> I, Thomas Price Willard, of lawful age, do testify and declare, that being in the house of Daniel Harrington, of said Lexington, on the nineteenth instant, in the morning, about half an hour before sunrise, looked out of the window of said house and saw (as I suppose) about four hundred of Regulars, in one body coming up the road, and marched toward the north part of the common, back of the meeting-house of said Lexington; and as soon as said Regulars were against the east end of the meeting-house; the commanding officers said something, what I know not; but upon that the Regulars ran till they came within about eight or nine rods of about a hundred of the Militia of Lexington, who were collected on said common. . . .
>
> Thomas Price Willard.

Middlesex, ss., April 23, 1775:

> The within named Thomas Price Willard personally appeared, and after due caution to testify the whole truth and nothing but the truth, made solemn oath to the truth of the written deposition by him subscribed.
>
> Before us, Wm. Reed,
> Jona. Hastings,
> Duncan Ingraham,
> Justices of the Peace.

Province of Massachusetts-Bay,)
Charlestown, ss.)

> I, Nathaniel Gorham, Notary and Tabellion Publick, duly admitted and sworn, do certify that Wm. Reed, Jona. Hastings, and Duncan Ingraham, Esquires, are three of His Majesty's

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[2]Ibid., 489-490.

Justices for the County of Middlesex, and that full faith and credit is to be given to their transactions as such. In witness whereof I have hereunto affixed my hand and seal this twenty-sixth of April, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five.

Nathaniel Gorham, Notary Publick.

3. On June 17, 1826, Sylvanus Wood gave this sworn testimony as to his recollections of Lexington:[3]

"I, Sylvanus Wood, of Woburn, in the county of Middlesex and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, aged seventy-four years, do testify and say, that on the morning of the 19th of April, 1775, I was an inhabitant of Woburn living with Deacon Obediah Kendall; that about an hour before the break of day on said morning, I heard the Lexington bell ring; and fearing there was difficulty there I immediately arose, took my gun, and with Robert Douglass went in haste to Lexington, which was about three miles distant. When I arrived there, I inquired of Captain Parker, the commander of the Lexington company, what was the news. Parker told me he did not know what to believe, for a man had come up about half an hour before, and informed him that the British troops were not on the road. But while we were talking, a messenger came up and told the Captain that the British troops were within half a mile. Parker immediately turned to his drummer, William Diman, and ordered him to beat to arms,--which was done. Captain Parker then asked me if I would parade with his company. I told him I would. Parker then asked me if the young man with me would parade. I spoke to Douglass, and he said he would follow the Captain and me. By this time many of the company had gathered around the Captain at the hearing of the drum, where we stood, which was about half way between the meeting-house and Buckman's tavern. Parker says to his men, 'Every man of you, who is equipped, follow me,--and those of you who are not equipped, go into the meeting-house and furnish yourselves from the magazine, and immediately join the company.' Parker led those of us who were equipped to the north end of Lexington Common, near the Bedford road, and formed us in single file. I was stationed about in the centre of the company. While we were standing, I left my place, and went from one end of the company to the other, and counted

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[3]Ezra Ripley, A History of the Fight at Concord (Herman Atwill, 1832), 35-36.

every man who was paraded, and whole number was thirty-eight and no more. . . .[4]

4. Nathaniel Parkhurst and thirteen other Lexington militia-men gave this sworn testimony before three Justices of the Peace in Middlesex County:[5]

Lexington, April 25, 1775.

We, Nathaniel Parkhurst, Jonas Parker, John Monroe, Jun., John Winship, Solomon Poirce, John Muzzy, Abner Mead, John Bridge, Junior, Ebenezer Bowman, William Munroe 3d, Micah Hagar, Samuel Sanderson, Samuel Hastings, and James Brown, of Lexington, in the County of Middlesex, and Colony of Massachusetts Bay, in New-England, and all of lawful age, do testify and say, that the morning of the nineteenth of April instant, about one or two o'clock, being informed that a number of Regular Officers had been riding up and down the road, the evening and night preceding, and that some of the inhabitants as they were passing had been insulted by the officers, and stopped by them; and being also informed that the Regular Troops were on their march from Boston, in order as it was said, to take the Colony Stores then deposited at Concord, we met on the parade of our Company in this Town; and after the Company had collected we were ordered by Captain John Parker, who commanded us, to disperse for the present, and to be ready to attend the beat of the drum; and accordingly the Company went into houses near the place of parade. We further testify and say, that about five o'clock in the morning, we attended the beat of our drum, and were formed on the parade. We were faced towards the Regulars, then marching up to us, and some of our Company were coming to the parade with their backs towards the Troops, and others on the parade began to disperse. . . .

B. A Shot Rang Out: Eye-Witness Accounts

The first shot in any major conflict is usually an event of great

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[4](Footnote in original.) This does not include those who went into the meeting-house and were "cut off."

[5]Peter Force, ed., American Archives, 493-494.

significance. That action alone is often used to establish who was the "aggressor" and who the "innocent victim." The government of the United States has always taken great pains to be sure that it would not be the party to fire first, no matter how threatening the situation. Such widely separated events as Lincoln's maneuvering at Fort Sumter in 1861 or Kennedy's refusal to launch an offensive against Cuba during the missile crisis of 1962 both provide clear evidence of the great concern for the responsibility of firing the first shot. World opinion and future alliances during any ensuing conflict could well depend on the assessment of such responsibility.

In the spring of 1775, it was clear that neither the British nor the colonists wanted to be adjudged the aggressor in any initial conflict. General Gage was so careful not to offend Massachusetts' sensibilities that his men came to feel that they could do no right and the irksome, heckling patriots, no wrong. On the other hand, such colonial leaders as those gathered in the Massachusetts Provincial Congress or the Massachusetts Committee of Public Safety made it quite clear that any military preparations which they might undertake were completely of a defensive nature. Under no circumstances were the Militia or the Minute-men to take unprovoked, offensive actions.

No matter what the precautions on either side, shots were fired at Lexington on the morning of April 19, 1775. Shots were fired, men were wounded, and some men died. Who was responsible? Certainly neither side wanted to accept the blame.

The following statements were all made by men who were there. They are first-hand, eye-witness accounts. After weighing them, one against the other, who do you think fired first?

1. Thomas Fessenden, a colonial onlooker, gave this sworn testimony to the Justices of the Peace:[6]

Lexington, April 23, 1775.

I, Thomas Fessenden, of lawful age, testify and declare, that being in a pasture near the meeting-house at said Lexington, on Wednesday last, at about half an hour before sunrise, . . . I saw three officers on horseback advance to the front of said Regulars, when one of them being within six rods of the said Militia, cried out, "Disperse, you rebels, immediately;" on which he brandished his sword over his head three times; meanwhile the second officer, who was about two rods behind him, fired a pistol pointed at said Militia, and the Regulars kept huzzaing till he had finished brandishing his sword, and when he has thus finished brandishing his sword, he pointed it down towards said Militia, and immediately on which the said Regulars fired a volley at the Militia and then I ran off, as fast as I could, while they continued firing till I got out of their reach. I further testify, that as soon as ever the officer cried "Disperse, you rebels," the said Company of Militia dispersed every way as fast as they could, and while they were dispersing the Regulars kept firing at them incessantly, and further saith not.

Thomas Fessenden.

Middlesex, ss., April 23, 1775:

The within named Thomas Fessenden appeared, and after due caution to testify the whole truth and nothing but the truth, made solemn oath to the truth of the within deposition by him subscribed.

Before us,

William Reed,
Josiah Johnson,
William Stickney,
Justices of the Peace.

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[6]Ibid., 495-496.

Province of the Massachusetts-Bay)
Charlestown, ss.)

I, Nathaniel Gorham, Notary and Tabellion Public, by lawful authority duly admitted and sworn, hereby certify to all whom it may or doth concern, that William Reed, Josiah Johnson, and William Stickney, Esquires, are three of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the County of Middlesex, and that full faith and credit is to be given to their transactions as such. In witness whereof I have hereunto affixed my hand and seal this twenty-sixth day of April, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five.

Nathaniel Gorham,
Notary Publick.

2. The following version came from the personal diary of a young British officer, Lieutenant John Barker:[7]

19th. At 2 o'clock we began our March by wading through a very long ford up to our Middles: after going a few miles we took 3 or 4 People who were going off to give intelligence; about 5 miles on this side of a Town called Lexington, which lay in our road, we heard there were some hundreds of People collected together intending to oppose us and stop our going on; at 5 o'clock we arrived there, and saw a number of People, I believe between 2 and 300, formed in a Common in the middle of the Town; we still continued advancing, keeping prepared against an attack tho' without intending to attack them; but on our coming near them they fired one or two shots, upon which our Men without any orders, rushed in upon them, fired and put 'em to flight; several of them were killed, we cou'd not tell how many, because they were got behind Walls and into the Woods; We had a Man of the 10th light Infantry wounded, nobody else hurt. We then formed on the Common, but with some difficulty, the Men were so wild they cou'd hear no orders; we waited a considerable time there, and at length proceeded on our way to Concord. . . .

3. The official deposition of a captured colonist, Simon Winship, reads as follows:[8]

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[7]"A British Officer in Boston," The Atlantic Monthly, XXXIX (April, 1877), 398-399.

[8]Peter Force, ed., American Archives, 490.

Lexington, April 25, 1775.

Simon Winship, of Lexington, in the County of Middlesex, and Province of Massachusetts-Bay, New-England, being of lawful age, testifieth and saith, that on the nineteenth of April instant, about four o'clock in the morning, as he was passing the publick road in said Lexington, peaceably and unarmed, about two miles and a half distant from the meeting-house in said Lexington, he was met by a body of the King's Regular Troops, and being stopped by some officers of said Troops, was commanded to dismount. Upon asking why he must dismount, he was obliged by force to quit his horse, and ordered to march in the midst of the body; and being examined whether he had been warning the Minute-Men, he answered no, but had been out, and was then returning to his father's. Said Winship further testifies that he marched with said Troops until he came within about half a quarter of a mile of said meeting-house, where an officer commanded the Troops to halt, and then to prime and load. This being done, the said Troops marched on till they came within a few rods of Captain Parker's Company, who were partly collected on the place of parade, when said Winship observed an officer at the head of said Troops flourishing his sword, and with a loud voice giving the word fire; which was instantly followed by a discharge of arms from said Regular Troops. And said Winship is positive, and in the most solemn manner declares, that there was no discharge of arms on either side till the word fire was given by said officer as above.

Simon Winship.

4. John Bateman, a captured British regular, swore to the following version four days after the battle:[9]

> I, John Bateman, belonging to the Fifty-Second Regiment, commanded by Colonel Jones, on Wednesday morning on the nineteenth day of April instant, was in the party marching to Concord, being at Lexington, in the County of Middlesex; being nigh the meeting-house in said Lexington, there was a small party of men gathered together in that place when our Troops marched by, and I testify and declare, that I heard the word of command given to the Troops to fire, and some of said Troops did fire, and I saw one of said small party lay dead on the ground nigh said meeting-house, and I testify that I never heard any of the inhabitants so much as fire one gun on said Troops.
>
> John Bateman.

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[9]Ibid., 496.

5. On the 27th of April, Lieutenant William Sutherland, another junior British officer, wrote a letter to the secretary of the British commander in Massachusetts, General Gage, offering this view of the encounter:[10]

> /Sutherland indicates that the British were fired on first by a body of over 400 colonialists. Their only response was to demand that the colonialists lay down their arms but they instead fired into the British ranks which the British soldiers for the first time returned. After being briefly scattered the British returned the attack./

6. Nathaniel Mullekin and 33 other militiamen submitted this sworn deposition:[11]

> Lexington, April 25, 1775.
>
> We, Nathaniel Mullekin, Philip Russell, Moses Harrington, Junior, Thomas and Daniel Harrington, William Grimer, William Tidd, Isaac Hastings, Jonas Stone, Jr., James Wyman, Thaddeus Harrington, John Chandler, Joshua Reed, Jun., Joseph Simonds, Phineas Smith, John Chandler, Jun., Reuben Lock, Joel Viles, Nathan Reed, Samuel Tidd, Benjamin Lock, Thomas Winship, Simeon Snow, John Smith, Moses Harrington, the third, Joshua Reed, Ebenezer Parker, John Harrington, Enoch Willington, John Hosmer, Isaac Green, Phineas Stearns, Isaac Durent, and Thomas Headly, Jun., all of lawful age, and inhabitants of Lexington, in the County of Middlesex, and Colony of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New-England, do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth of April instant, about one or two o'clock in the morning, being informed that several officers of the Regulars had, the evening before, been riding up and down the road, and had detained and insulted the inhabitants passing the same; and also understanding that a body of Regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord, with intent (as it was supposed) to take the stores belonging to the Colony in that Town, we were alarmed; and having met at the place of our Company's parade, were dismissed by our Captain, John Parker, for the present, with orders to be

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[10]Allen French, General Gage's Informers (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1932), 58-61.

[11]Peter Force, ed., American Archives, 492-493.

ready to attend at the beat of the drum. We further testify and declare, that about five o'clock in the morning, hearing our drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade, and soon found that a large body of Troops were marching towards us. Some of our Company were coming up to the parade, and others had reached it; at which time the Company began to disperse. Whilst our backs were turned on the Troops we were fired on by them, and a number of our men were instantly killed and wounded. Not a gun was fired by any person in our Company on the Regulars, to our knowledge, before they fired on us, and they continued firing until we had all made our escape.

7. Lieutenant Edward Gould, a captured British officer, offered this sworn testimony:[12]

Medford, April 25, 1775.

I, Edward Ghoroton Gould, of His Majesty's own Regiment of Foot, being of lawful age, do testify and declare, that on the evening of the eighteenth instant, under the orders of General Gage, I embarked with the Light-Infantry and Grenadiers of the line, commanded by Colonel Smith, and landed on the marshes of Cambridge, from whence we proceeded to Lexington. On our arrival at that place, we saw a body of Provincial Troops armed, to the number of about sixty or seventy men; on our approach they dispersed, and soon after firing began; but which party fired first, I cannot exactly say, as our Troops rushed on shouting and huzzaing previous to the firing, which was continued by our Troops as long as any of the Provincials were to be seen. From thence we marched to Concord. . . .

8. George Leonard, a well-known Tory (colonist who sympathized with the British) forwarded this account to General Gage. Although it states that he "Deposes," this was not an officially sworn and notarized statement.[13]

/Leonard relates how in riding along with a group of soldiers in Lord Percy's Brigade he came upon a wounded colonialist who indicated that some unorganized colonists had fired on the British first which led to the British counter-attack. Others with the wounded man supported his testimony and "Blamed the rashness of their own pepol for fireing first."/

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12 Ibid., 500-501.

13 Allen French, General Gage's Informers, 57-58.

9. The official deposition of John Parker stated:[14]

> I, John Parker, of lawful age, and commander of the Militia in Lexington, do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth instant, in the morning, about one of the clock, being informed that there were a number of Regular Officers riding up and down the road, stopping and insulting people as they passed the road, and also was informed that a number of Regular Troops were on their march from Boston, in order to take the Province Stores at Concord, ordered our Militia to meet on the common in said Lexington, to consult what to do, and concluded not to be discovered, nor meddle or make with said Regular Troops (if they should approach) unless they should insult us; and upon their sudden approach, I immediately ordered our Militia to disperse and not to fire. Immediately said Troops made their appearance, and rushed furiously, fired upon and killed eight of our party, without receiving any provocation therefor from us.
>
> John Parker.

10. Major John Pitcairn, commander of the advanced British party which engaged the Lexington militia, sent the following official report of his activities to General Gage:[15]

> /Pitcairn testifies that he ordered his soldiers not to fire but that some of the colonists fired first and the British returned this fire, although they were not ordered to do so. His only order was to advance and to "surround and disarm" the colonists./

C. A Shot Rang Out: Secondary Accounts

The following accounts of the Lexington affair come from a diverse number of sources; reminiscences of actual participants given many years after the fact, newspaper stories, "official" reports, personal diaries, and a version of an interested citizen who did not happen to be

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[14]Peter Force, ed., American Archives, 491.

[15]Allen French, General Gage's Informers, 53-54.

there on that April morning in '75. These all provide evidence of one sort or another. Much of it, again, is conflicting.

Does this additional material modify your view as to what happened at Lexington?

1. The following excerpt is drawn from an account written by General Gage on April 29, 1775, presumably based on the reports of his officers. This "Circumstantial Account" stood as the official statement of the British government in Massachusetts:[16]

> A circumstantial Account of an Attack that happened on the 19th April, 1775, on His Majesty's Troops, by a number of the People of the Province of the MASSACHUSETTS-BAY.
>
> (The) Major gave directions to the Troops to move forward, but on no account to fire, nor even to attempt it without orders. When they arrived at the end of the village, they observed about two hundred armed men drawn up on a green, and when the Troops came within one hundred yards of them, they began to file off towards some stone walls on their right flank; the Light-Infantry observing this, ran after them. The Major instantly called to the soldiers not to fire, but to surround and disarm them. Some of them who had jumped over a wall, then fired four or five shot at the Troops, wounded a man of the Tenth Regiment, and the Major's horse in two places, and at the same time several shots were fired from a meeting-house on the left. Upon this, without any order or regularity, the Light-Infantry began a scattered fire, and killed several of the country people, but were silenced as soon as the authority of their officers could make them.
>
> After this, Colonel Smith marched up with the remainder of the detachment, and the whole body proceeded to Concord. . . .

2. One kind of colonial reaction is typified by this letter dated Boston, April 20, 1775:[17]

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[16]Peter Force, ed., American Archives, 435.

[17]Ibid., 359-360.

> Yesterday produced a scene the most shocking that New-England ever beheld. Last Saturday P.M., orders were sent to the several Regiments quartered here, not to let their Grenadiers or Light-Infantry do any duty till farther orders; upon which the inhabitants conjectured that some secret expedition was on foot, and, being upon the look-out, they observed those bodies on the move between ten and eleven o'clock on Tuesday night, observing a perfect silence in their march, towards the point opposite to Phipps's farm, where boats were in waiting, that conveyed them over. The men appointed to alarm the country on such occasions got over by stealth as early as the Troops, and took their different routes.
>
> The first advice we had was about eight o'clock in the morning, when it was reported that the Troops had fired upon and killed five men in Lexington. . . . About twelve o'clock it was given out by the General's Aid-de-Camp that no person was killed, and that a single gun had not been fired, which report was variously believed; but, between one and two o'clock, certain accounts came that eight were killed outright, and fourteen wounded of the inhabitants of Lexington. Those people, it seems, to the number of about forty, were drawn out early in the morning near the Meeting-House to exercise; upon which the party of Light-Infantry and Grenadiers, to the number of about eight hundred, came up to them, and ordered them to disperse. The commander replied that they were innocently amusing themselves with exercise, that they had not any ammunition with them, and therefore should not molest or disturb them. This answer not satisfying, the Troops fired upon them, and killed three or four; the others took to their heels, and the Troops continued to fire. A few took refuge in the Meeting-House, when the soldiers shoved up the windows, pointed their guns in, and killed three there. This is the best account I can learn of the beginning of the fatal day, and you must naturally suppose that such a piece of cruelty would rouse the Country.

3. The London Gazette presented this version of the Lexington affair to its British readers:[18]

> Whitehall, June 10, 1775.
>
> Lieutenant Nunn, of the Navy, arrived this morning at Lord Dartmouth's, and brought letters from General Gage,

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[18] Ibid., 945-946

Lord Percy, and Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, containing the following particulars of what passed on the nineteenth of April last between a detachment of the King's Troops in the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, and several parties of rebel Provincials. . . .

Lieutenant-Colonel Smith finding, after he had advanced some miles on his march, that the country had been alarmed by the firing of guns and ringing of bells, despatched six Companies of Light-Infantry, in order to secure two bridges on different roads beyond Concord, who, upon their arrival at Lexington, found a body of the country people under arms, on a green close to the road; and upon the King's Troops marching up to them, in order to inquire the reason of their being so assembled, they went off in great confusion, and several guns were fired upon the King's Troops from behind a stone wall, and also from the meeting-house and other houses, by which one man was wounded, and Major Pitcairn's horse shot in two places. In consequence of this attack by the rebels, the troops returned the fire and killed several of them. After which the detachment marched on to Concord without any thing further happening. . . .

4. Robert Douglas swore to this deposition on May 3, 1827:[19]

In about fifteen minutes after we entered the tavern, a person came to the door and said the British were within half a mile. I then heard an officer (who I afterwards learned was Captain Parker) call his drummer and order him to beat to arms. I paraded with the Lexington company between the meeting-house and the tavern, and then marched to the common near the road that leads to Bedford; there we were ordered to load our guns. Some of the company observed, 'There are so few of us, it would be folly to stand here.' Captain Parker replied, 'The first man who offers to run shall be shot down.' The Lexington company began to break off on the left wing, and soon all dispersed. I think no American was killed or wounded by the first fire of the British, unless Captain Parker might have been. No one of Captain Parker's company fired on the British, to my knowledge, that morning, and I think I should have known it, had they fired. I knew but two men of the Lexington company, and I never heard any person say that the Americans fired on the British that morning at Lexington.

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[19]Ezra Ripley, A History of the Fight at Concord, 35.

After the British marched toward Concord, I saw eight men who had been killed, among whom were Captain Parker[20] and a Mr. Porter of Woburn.

ROBERT DOUGLASS.

5. Sylvanus Wood's deposition (see I-A, 3) sworn to in 1826, continued in this fashion:[21]

Just as I . . . got back to my place, I perceived the British troops had arrived on the spot, between the meeting-house and Buckman's, near where Captain Parker stood when he first led off his men. The British troops immediately wheeled so as to cut off those, who had gone into the meeting-house. The British troops approached us rapidly in platoons, with a General officer on horse-back at their head. The officer came up to within about two rods of the centre of the company, where I stood.--The first platoon being about three rods distant. They there halted. The officer then swung his sword, and said, 'Lay down your arms, you damn'd rebels, or you are all dead men--fire.' Some guns were fired by British at us from the first platoon, but no person was killed or hurt, being probably charged only with powder. Just at this time, Captain Parker ordered every man to take care of himself. The company immediately dispersed; and while the company was dispersing and leaping over the wall, the second platoon of the British fired, and killed some of our men. There was not a gun fired by any of Captain Parker's company within my knowledge. I was so situated that I must have known it, had any thing of the kind taken place before a total dispersion of our company. I have been intimately acquainted with the inhabitants of Lexington, and particularly with those of Captain Parker's company, and, with one exception, I have never heard any of them say or pretend that there was any firing at the British from Parker's company, or any individual in it, until within a year or two.--One member of the company told me, many years since, that after Parker's company had dispersed, and he was at some distance, he gave them 'the guts of his gun.'

6. Ensign Jeremy Lister, the youngest of the British officers gave the following account in a personal narrative written in 1732:[22]

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[20](Footnote in original) It is presumed the witness meant Jonas Parker, as the Captain was not killed.

[21]Ezra Ripley, A History of the Fight at Concord, 36.

[22]Allen French, General Gage's Informers, 55.

> Lister recounts how Pitcairn ordered the colonists to disperse and upon their refusal ordered the British troops to advance upon them. Lister then claims that the colonists fired on the British and retreated behind a wall. The British then "Killed and Wounded either 7 or 8 men," before they continued their march.

7. The Reverend William Gordon was not present at Lexington on the 19th. Dissatisfied, however, with the anticipated version of either side as to what happened, he made his own inquiry into the affair and subsequently published his findings under the title: "An account of the commencement of Hostilities between Great Britain and America, in the Province of Massachusetts-Bay. By the Reverend William Gordon of Roxbury, in a letter to a Gentleman in England, dated May 17, 1775." [23]

> The simple truth, I take to be this, which I received from one of the prisoners at Concord in free conversation, one James Marr, a native of Aberdeen, in Scotland, of the Fourth Regiment, who was upon the advanced guard, consisting of six, besides a sergeant and corporal: They were met by three men on horseback before they got to the meeting-house a good way; an officer bid them stop; to which it was answered, you had better turn back, for you shall not enter the Town; when the said three persons rode back again, and at some distance one of them offered to fire, but the piece flashed in the pan without going off. I asked Marr whether he could tell if the piece was designed at the soldiers, or to give an alarm? He could not say which. The said Marr further declared, that when they and the others were advanced, Major Pitcairn said to the Lexington Company, (which, by the way, was the only one there), stop, you rebels! and he supposed that the design was to take away their arms; but upon seeing the Regulars they dispersed, and a firing commenced, but who fired first he could not say. The said Marr, together with Evan Davies of the Twenty-Third, George Cooper of the Twenty-Third, and William McDonald of the Thirty-Eighth, respectively assured me in each other's presence, that being in the room where John Bateman, of the Fifty-Second, was, (he was in an adjoining room, too ill to admit of my conversing with him), they heard the said Bateman say, that the Regulars fired first, and saw go through the solemnity of confirming the same by an oath on the Bible.

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[23]Peter Force, ed., American Archives, 627-629.

Samuel Lee, a private in the Eighteenth Regiment, Royal Irish, acquainted me, that it was the talk among the soldiers that Major Pitcairn fired his pistol, then drew his sword, and ordered them to fire; which agrees with what Levi Harrington, a youth of fourteen last November, told me, that being upon the common, and hearing the Regulars were coming up, he went to the meeting-house, and saw them down in the road, on which he returned to the Lexington Company; that a person on horseback rode round the meeting, and came towards the company that way, said something loud, but could not tell what, rode a little further, then stopped and fired a pistol, which was the first report he heard, then another on horseback fired his pistol; then three or four Regulars fired their guns; upon which, hearing the bullets whistle, he ran off, and saw no more of the affair.

Mr. Paul Revere, who was sent express, was taken and detained some time by the officers, being afterwards upon the spot, and finding the Regulars at hand, passed through the Lexington Company with another, having between them a box of papers belonging to Mr. Hancock, and went down a cross road till there was a house so between him and the company as that he could not see the latter; he told me likewise, that he had not got half a gun-shot from them before the Regulars appeared; that they halted about three seconds; that upon hearing the report of a pistol or gun, he looked round, and saw the smoke in front of the Regulars, our people being out of view because of the house; then the Regulars huzzaed and fired, first two more guns, then the advanced guard, and so the whole body. The bullets flying thick about him, and he having nothing to defend himself with, ran into a wood, where he halted, and heard the firing for about a quarter of an hour.

James Brown, one of the Lexington Militia, informed me, that he was upon the common; that two pistols were fired from the party of the soldiers towards the Militia-men as they were getting over the wall to be out of the way, and that immediately upon it the soldiers began to fire their guns; that being got over the wall, and seeing the soldiers fire pretty freely, he fired upon them, and some others did the same.

Simon Winship of Lexington, declared, that being upon the road about four o'clock, two miles and an half on this side of the meeting-house, he was stopped by the Regulars, and commanded by some of the officers to dismount, or he was a dead man; that he was obliged to march with the said Troops until he came within about half a quarter of a mile of the said meeting-house, when an officer commanded the Troops to halt, and then to prime and load; which being done, the

Troops marched on till they came within a few rods of Captain Parker's Lexington Company, who were partly collected on the place of parade, when said Winship observed an officer at the head of said Troops flourishing his sword round his head in the air, and with a loud voice giving the word fire; the said Winship is positive that there was no discharge of arms on either side, until the word fire was given by the said officer as above.

I shall not trouble you with more particulars, but give you the substance as it lies in my own mind, collected from the persons whom I examined for my own satisfaction. The Lexington Company upon seeing the Troops, and being of themselves so unequal a match for them, were deliberating for a few moments what they should do, when several dispersing of their own heads, the Captain soon ordered the rest to disperse for their own safety. Before the order was given, three or four of the regular officers, seeing the company as they came up on the rising ground on this side the meeting, rode forward one or more, round the meeting-house, leaving it on the right hand, and so came upon them that way; upon coming up one cried out, 'you damned rebels, lay down your arms;' another, 'stop, you rebels;' a third, 'disperse, you rebels,' &c. Major Pitcairn, I suppose, thinking himself justified by Parliamentary authority to consider them as rebels, perceiving that they did not actually lay down their arms, observing that the generality were getting off, while a few continued in their military position, and apprehending there could be no great hurt in killing a few such Yankees, which might probably, according to the notions that had been instilled into him by the tory party, of the Americans being poltrons, end all the contest, gave the command to fire, then fired his own pistol, and so set the whole affair agoing. The printed account says very different; but whatever the General may have sent home in support of that account, the publick have nothing but bare assertions, and I have such valid evidence of the falsehood of several matters therein contained, that with me it has very little weight. The same account tells us, that several shots were fired from a meeting-house on the left, of which I heard not a single syllable, either from the prisoners or others, and the mention of which it would have been almost impossible to have avoided, had it been so, by one or another among the numbers with whom I freely and familiarly conversed.

8. In 1775 Benjamin Franklin was acting as colonial representative in London. So that he might better present what the colonist thought was the true picture of the Lexington affair to the British public, the

Massachusetts Provincial Congress collected 21 sworn depositions from both colonial and British witnesses, and then forwarded the depositions and the following introductory letter to Franklin:[24]

In Provincial Congress, Watertown,)
April 26, 1775.)

To the Inhabitants of Great Britain:

Friends and Fellow-Subjects: Hostilities are at length commenced in this Colony by the Troops under command of General Gage; and it being of the greatest importance that an early, true, and authentick account of this inhuman proceeding should be known to you, the Congress of this Colony have transmitted the same, and from want of a session of the honourable Continental Congress, think it proper to address you on the alarming occasion.

By the clearest depositions relative to this transaction, it will appear that on the night preceding the nineteenth of April instant, . . . the Town of Lexington by these means was alarmed, and a company of the inhabitants mustered on the occasion; that the Regular Troops, on their way to Concord, marched into the said Town of Lexington, and the said Company, on their approach, began to disperse; that notwithstanding this, the Regulars rushed on with great violence, and first began hostilities by firing on said Lexington Company, whereby they killed eight and wounded several others; that the Regulars continued their fire until those of said Company, who were neither killed nor wounded, had made their escape. . . .

These, brethren, are marks of ministerial vengeance against this Colony, for refusing, with her sister colonies, a submission to slavery. But they have not yet detached us from our Royal Sovereign. We profess to be his loyal and dutiful subjects, and so hardly dealt with as we have been, are still ready, with our lives and fortunes, to defend his person, family, crown, and dignity. Nevertheless, to the persecution and tyranny of his cruel Ministry we will not tamely submit; appealing to Heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free. . . .

We sincerely hope that the great Sovereign of the Universe, who hath so often appeared for the English Nation, will support you in every rational and manly exertion with these

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[24] Ibid., 487-488.

Colonies, for saving it from ruin; and that in a constitutional connection with the Mother Country, we shall soon be altogether a free and happy people.

Per order: Jos. Warren, President pro tem.

9. The following excerpt is drawn from the official report of Lieutenant-Colonel Smith to General Gage, written April 22, 1775.[25]

/Smith indicates that the American colonists fired on the British troops first. Previous to the firing the British troops advanced upon the colonists "without any intention of injuring them," according to Smith./

25Henry S. Commager, ed., Documents of American History (Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1963), 7th Edition, 90.

SECTION II

HISTORIANS AND THE LEXINGTON AFFAIR

A. Historians of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The following excerpts are drawn from the works of British and American historians. These are the products of men and women who have had time to research and think over the matters about which they were writing. They would, supposedly, be able to exercise greater insight and impartiality than those less well trained in the discipline of history. You will notice, however, that controversies still exist.

After examining and comparing these excerpts, what conclusions might you reach concerning work that historians have done on the Lexington Affair? What conclusions might you reach about the writing of history in general?

1. Mercy Warren, an American author, published her history of the revolution "Interspersed with Biographical, Political, and Moral Observations" in 1805.[1]

> Few suspected there was a real intention to attack the defenceless peasants of Lexington, or to try the bravery of the surrounding villages. But it being reduced to a certainty, that a number of persons had, the evening before, in the environs of Cambridge, been insulted, abused, and stripped, by officers in British uniform; and that a considerable armament might be immediately expected in the vicinity, captain Parker, who commanded a company of militia, ordered them to appear at beat of drum on the parade at Lexington, on the nineteenth. They accordingly obeyed, and were embodied before sunrise.
>
> Colonel Smith, who commanded about eight hundred men, came suddenly upon them within a few minutes after, and accosting them in language very unbecoming an officer of his rank,

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[1] Mercy Warren, History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution (E. Larkin, Boston, 1805), I, 184-185.

> he ordered them to lay down their arms, and disperse immediately. He illiberally branded them with the epithets of rebel and traitor; and before the little party had time, either to resist or to obey, he, with wanton precipitation, ordered his troops to fire. Eight men were killed on the spot; and, without any concern for his rashness, or little molestation from the inhabitants, Smith proceeded on his rout.

2. The work of Robert Bisset, and English author, was published in this country in 1811.[2]

> Colonel Smith, finding that their destination was suspected, if not discovered, ordered the light infantry to march with all possible despatch to secure the bridges and different roads beyond Concord; and to intercept the stores, should they be attempted to be moved. These companies about five in the morning reached Lexington, fifteen miles from Boston, where they saw a body of provincial militia assembled on a green near the road. The Americans, before this time, had disclaimed all design of attacking the king's troops, professed to take up arms only for the purpose of self-defense, and avoided skirmishes with the British soldiers; but on this day hostilities actually commenced, and here the first blood was shed in the contest between Britain and America. When the British troops approached, the Americans were questioned for what purpose they had met, and ordered to disperse; on which the colonists immediately retired in confusion. Several guns were then fired upon the king's soldiers from a stone wall, and also from the meeting house and other buildings, by which one man was wounded, and a horse shot under major Pitcairn. Our soldiers returned the fire, killed some of the provincials, wounded others, and dispersed the rest. The Americans asserted, that the fire began on our side; and, besides endeavoring to establish the assertion by testimony, argued from probability; our light infantry consisted of six companies; the militia assembled at Lexington, of only one company; was it probable (they asked) that an inferior number of militia would attack a superior number of regular troops? To this the obvious answer is, the indiscretion of an alleged act is not a proof that it was not committed, nor is it sufficient to overturn positive evidence. The British officers who were present, gave the account which General Gage reported in his letters to government, that the Americans fired first; and on the testimony of several respectable gentlemen of unimpeached character, this assertion rests.

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[2]Robert Bisset, The History of the Reign of George III to the Termination of the Late War (Levie and Weaver, Philadelphia, 1811), 5-6.

3. A second English author, William Belsham, was also published in 1811:[3]

> General Gage having intelligence of a considerable magazine deposited at the town of Concord, about twenty miles distant from Boston, where the provincial congress was also held, detached, on the night preceding the 19th of April, 800 grenadiers and light infantry, under the command of Colonel Smith, who proceeded on their march with great silence: but by the firing of guns and ringing of bells they at length perceived themselves discovered; and on their (British) arrival at Lexington, at five in the morning, they found the company of militia belonging to that place drawn up on the green; on which Major Pitcairn, who led the advanced guard, cried out, "Disperse, rebels! throw down your arms, and disperse!" This not being immediately complied with, he ordered the soldiers to fire; eight or ten of the provincials were killed, and the rest speedily retreated. The King's troops immediately marched on to Concord. . . .

4. Richard Frothingham, an American, published his study in 1851:[4]

> It was now about half-past four in the morning. Captain Parker ordered the drum to beat, alarm guns to be fired, and Sergeant William Monroe to form his company in two ranks a few rods north of the meeting-house. It was a part of "the constitutional army," which was authorized to make a regular and forcible resistance to any open hostility by the British troops; and it was for this purpose that this gallant and devoted band, on this memorable morning, appeared on the field. Whether it ought to maintain its ground, or whether it ought to retreat, would depend upon the bearing and numbers of the regulars. It was not long in suspense. At a short distance from the parade-ground, the British officers, regarding the American drum as a challenge, ordered their troops to halt, to prime and load, and then to march forward in double-quick time. Meantime sixty or seventy of the militia had collected, and about forty spectators, a few of whom had arms. Captain Parker ordered his men not to fire unless they were fired upon. A part of his company had time to form in a military position facing the regulars; but while some were joining the ranks, and others were dispersing, the British troops rushed

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[3]William Belsham, History of Great Britain, 1688-1802 (Richard Phillips, London, 1811), VI, 144.

[4]Richard Frothingham, History of the Siege of Bunker Hill and of the Battle of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill (Little and Brown, Boston 1851), 61-64. (Some footnotes omitted.)

on, shouting and firing, and their officers--among whom was Major Pitcairn--exclaiming, "Ye villains! ye rebels! disperse!" "Lay down your arms!" "Why don't you lay down your arms?" The militia did not instantly disperse, nor did they proceed to lay down their arms. The first guns, few in number, did no execution. A general discharge followed, with fatal results.5 A few of the militia who had been wounded, or who saw others killed or wounded by their side, no longer hesitated, but returned the fire of the regulars. Jonas Parker, John Monroe, and Ebenezer Monroe, jr., and others, fired before leaving the line; Solomon Brown and James Brown fired from behind a stone wall; one other person fired from the back door

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5(Footnote in original.) Gordon's Letter, May 17, 1775: Clark's Narrative: Depositions of 1775. Dr. John Warren, in his Ms. diary,--for which, and for other courtesies, I am indebted to his son, Dr. John C. Warren,--writes, April 19, 1775: "Some dispersed, but a few continued in a military position; on seeing which, Major Pitcairn, upon the plea of some person snapping a gun," &c. Gordon also says "a few continued in their military position." This agrees with Bernicre's (British) account, which says: Major Pitcairn cried out for the militia "To throw down their arms and disperse, which they did not do; he called out a second time, but to no purpose," &c. Gordon also gives the details of a person, just before the firing, "offering to fire, but the piece flashed in the pan without going off."

Stiles, in his Ms. diary, gives the following interesting relation of Major Pitcairn's own version of the beginning of the firing:--

1775, August 19.--"Major Pitcairn, who was a good man in a bad cause, insisted upon it, to the day of his death, that the colonists fired first; and that he commanded not to fire, and endeavored to stay and stop the firing after it began: but then he told this with such circumstances as convince me that he was deceived, though on the spot. He does not say that he saw the colonists fire first. Had he said it, I would have believed him, being a man of integrity and honor. He expressly says he did not see who fired first; and yet believed the peasants began. His account is this: That riding up to them, he ordered them to disperse; which they not doing instantly, he turned about to order his troops to draw out so as to surround and disarm them. As he turned, he saw a gun in a peasant's hand, from behind a wall, flash in the pan, without going off; and instantly, or very soon, two or three guns went off, by which he found his horse wounded, and also a man near him wounded. These guns he did not see; but believing they could not come from his own people, doubted not, and so asserted, that they came from our people, and that thus they began the attack. The impetuosity of the king's troops was such, that a promiscuous, uncommanded, but general fire took place, which Pitcairn could not prevent; though he struck his staff or sword downwards with all earnestness, as the signal to forbear or cease firing."

of Buckman's house; Nathan Monroe, Lieutenant Benjamin Tidd, and others retreated a short distance and fired.[6] Meantime the regulars continued their fire as long as the militia remained in sight, killing eight and wounding ten. Jonas Parker, who repeatedly said he never would run from the British, was wounded at the second fire, but he still discharged his gun, and was killed by a bayonet. "A truer heart did not bleed at Thermopylae."[7] Isaac Muzzy, Jonathan Harrington, and Robert Monroe, were also killed on or near the place where the line was formed. "Harrington's was a cruel fate. He fell in front of his own house, on the north of the common. His wife at the window saw him fall, and then start up, the blood gushing from his breast. He stretched out his hands towards her, as if for assistance, and fell again. Rising once more on his hands and knees, he crawled across the road towards his dwelling. She ran to meet him at the door, but it was to see

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[6](Footnote in original.) This account is not more than just to Lexington. The contemporary evidence of this return fire is too positive to be set aside. In the counter manifesto to Gage's proclamation, prepared in June, 1775, which was not published at the time, it is said that the British, "in a most barbarous and infamous manner, fired upon a small number of the inhabitants, and cruelly murdered eight men. The fire was returned by some of the survivors, but their number was too inconsiderable to annoy the regular troops, who proceeded on their errand, and upon coming up to Concord," &c. &c. I copy from Ms. in Mass. Archives. Gordon, May 17, 1775, says that James Brown informed him, that "being got over the wall, and seeing the soldiers fire pretty freely, he fired upon them, and some others did the same." Deposition Number 8, of 1775, is clear:--"About five o'clock in the morning we attended the beat of our drum, and were formed on the parade. We were faced towards the regulars, then marching up to us, and some of our company were coming to the parade with their backs towards the troops; and others on the parade began to disperse, when the regulars fired on the company, before a gun was fired by any of our company on them." The great point was as to who fired first. Clark says:--"So far from firing first upon the king's troops, upon the most careful inquiry, it appears, that but very few of our people fired at all, and even they did not fire till, after being fired upon by the troops, they were wounded themselves," &c. Phinney's History contains the details, with depositions, which as to the main fact, are supported by the authorities of 1775. All the British accounts state that the fire was returned, or rather they state that it was begun, by the militia. This last assertion, made in Gage's hand-bill, (see Appendix) was contradicted. Much controversy took place about it, and the Provincial Congress account was prepared in reference to it. As late as May 3, 1776, a London journal says:--"It is whispered that the ministry are endeavoring to fix a certainty which party fired first at Lexington, before hostilities commenced, as the Congress declare, if it can be proved that American blood was first shed, it will go a great way towards effecting a reconciliation on the most honorable terms."

[7]Everett's Lexington Address. (Footnote in original.)

him expire at her feet."[8] Monroe was the standard bearer of his company at the capture of Louisburg. Caleb Harrington was killed as he was running from the meeting-house, after replenishing his stock of powder; Samuel Hadley and John Brown, after they had left the common; Asahel Porter, of Woburn, who had been taken prisoner by the British as he was endeavoring to effect his escape.[9] The British suffered but little; a private of the 10th regiment, and probably one other, were wounded, and Major Pitcairn's horse was struck.[10] Some of the provincials retreated up the road leading to Bedford, but most of them across a swamp to a rising ground north of the common. The British troops formed on the common, fired a volley, and gave three huzzas in token of their victory.[11] Colonel Smith, with the remainder of the troops, soon joined Major Pitcairn, and the whole detachment marched towards Concord, about six miles distant, which it reached without further interruption. After it left Lexington six of the regulars were taken prisoners.

5. Philip Henry Stanhope, an Englishman with the title of Lord Mahon, had his seven-volume study published in this country in 1853:[12]

> Marching all night the first ranks (of British) about five o'clock in the morning of the 19th reached Lexington, a small town about fifteen miles from Boston. Here they found a body of Militia belonging to the town and neighbourhood, amounting to seventy men, drawn out on the parade and under arms. It afterwards appeared that these arms, or some of them at least, were loaded. Major Pitcairn, who led the van, galloped up to inquire the cause of their assemblage. It is stated by the one side, but not acknowledged by the other, that he addressed them as "you rebels!" Certain it is that he bade them lay down their arms and disperse. The Americans showed no disposition to relinquish their arms, but they did begin to break their ranks and retire from the ground. Then it was that some firing occurred. According to the accounts of the British several muskets were discharged at them from

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[8]Ib. (Footnote in original.)

[9]Phinney's History. (Footnote in original.)

[10]Gage's account. (Footnote in original.)

[11]Phinney and Clark. (Footnote in original.)

[12]Lord Mahon, History of England, 1713-1783 (Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1853) VI, 36.

> behind a stone wall and from some adjoining houses, which wounded one man and shot Major Pitcairn's horse in two places; upon which they returned the fire. The Americans state, on the contrary, that the British fired first and without provocation. Be that fact, as it may, several of the Americans were now killed and wounded; and such was the first encounter, the first bloodshed, in this unhappy civil war.

6. Charles Hudson's history of the Town of Lexington, later revised by the Massachusetts Historical Society, was originally published in 1868:[13]

> /This selection indicates that the colonists were greatly aware of the danger, as well as the responsibility in organizing against the British. They also appeared to want to heed the Continental Congress's advice to fight only on the defensive and avoid collision with the British if possible. They went into battle with these intentions in mind. He implies that Major Pitcairn ordered "the first volley."/

7. William Lecky's history, published in 1892, offers still another example of the British handling of the Lexington materials:[14]

> The road lay through the little village of Lexington, where about five o'clock on the morning of the 19th, the advance guard of the British found a party of sixty or seventy armed volunteers drawn up to oppose them, on a green beside the road. They refused when summoned to disperse, and the English at once fired a volley, which killed or wounded sixteen of their number. The detachment then proceeded to Concord. . . .

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[13]Charles Hudson, History of the Town of Lexington, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, from Its First Settlement to 1868 (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1913), I, 148-151.

[14]William E. Lecky, A History of England in the Eighteenth Century (Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 1892), IV, 201.

8. Frank Coburn published this account in 1912:[15]

> /Coburn takes the position that a British officer behind Major Pitcairn fired first without Pitcairn's order, as his only order up to then had been for the colonists to lay down their arms and disperse. Pitcairn perhaps thought the discharge came from the colonists and then ordered the British to fire. The first volley was over their heads, the second "was fired to kill."/

9. Carl Becker, a prolific contributor to the writings on American history, wrote this volume in 1918:[16]

> /Becker points out that there were only 50 colonists against 1,000 British soldiers. He says the British rushed forward "with huzzas" and that shots were heard. After the minutemen were dispersed 8 lay dead./

10. Dr. J. H. Plumb, one of the most eminent of contemporary British historians, wrote the following comment in 1950:[17]

> /Plumb contends that the colonists were "drifting into anarchy and war" even before the Boston Tea Party and that after the Tea Party the British decided to take firm measures against the colonists. This resulted in colonial preparation for war which culminated in April, 1775 at Lexington Green, when the militia tried to stop British soldiers from marching to the gunpowder depot in Concord. He notes that they were harassed and sniped all the way back to Boston and that 293 were killed./

11. Richard Morris, one of the most respected of twentieth century

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[15]Frank W. Coburn, The Battle of April 19, 1775 (Frank Coburn, Lexington, 1912), 61-65, 69.

[16]Carl Becker, The Eve of the Revolution (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1918), 229-230.

[17]J. H. Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century, 1714-1815, (Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1950), 128.

American historians, included the following account in his Encyclopedia of American History:[18]

> /Morris indicates that there were 70 Minutemen at Lexington Green, that the first shot was "unidentified," that the first shot was followed by "a series of volleys from British platoons" without Pitcairn's orders, that only a few shots were returned from the American ranks, and that 8 Americans were killed and 10 wounded, while only one British soldier was wounded./

12. The work and writings of Winston Churchill are virtually without parallel among twentieth century Englishmen and earned him a Nobel Prize for literature:[19]

> /Churchill tells of 70 Minutemen who dispersed when ordered to do so by the leading British officer and notes the colonial orders not to provoke open conflict. In "the confusion," however, "someone fired," the volley was returned and the "ranks of the militia were thinned."/

13. J. S. Watson, an Englishman, presents this succinct version:[20]

> /Watson refers to the conflict on Lexington Green as "a small skirmish," notes that the stores at Concord were destroyed at the time of the British approach and that they made their way back to Charlestown "under skirmishing attacks."/

14. Lawrence Gipson, a noted modern American historian of the pre-

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[18]Richard B. Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1953), 1st edition, 85-86.

[19]Winston S. Churchill, A History of the English-Speaking Peoples: The Age of Revolution (Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1957), III, 180-181.

[20]J. Steven Watson, The Oxford History of England: The Reign of George III (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1960), XII, 201.

Revolutionary scene, offers this (double-barreled) approach to the affair at Lexington:[21]

> /Gipson traces the developments at Lexington Green as follows: the British regulars were met by "some 75" Minute Men, the British officers ordered them to disperse, they hesitated, the British opened fire, the Minute Men fled leaving 8 dead and 10 wounded. Gipson points out that the objective of the British was not to engage colonists in combat, but to destroy the military supplies in Concord, "hopefully without shedding blood." With this objective in mind, they continued on to Concord./

B. Textbooks and Truth

By this point you have read and considered a significant portion of the evidence on the Lexington affair. You are becoming somewhat of an expert yourself on that one historical incident. Most students of American history, however, have not been exposed to such a minute examination of this particular episode. They will, for the most part, know only what their textbook tells them about it. The following selections present excerpts from junior and senior high school history tests, all dealing with the question of who fired the first shot on that April morning.

1. The Democratic Experience by Louis B. Wright and other historians:[22]

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[21]Lawrence H. Gipson, The British Empire Before the American Revolution (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965), XII, 321-322.

[22]L. B. Wright, et. al., The Democratic Experience (Scott, Foresman and Co., Chicago, 1963), 34.

/This selection traces the background of the Lexington Green incident, notes that about 700 British soldiers were sent out to destroy the military stores in Concord, were met by and suffered great casualties from American minutemen, and escaped total destruction "only because reinforcements came from Boston."/

2. The History of a Free People by Bragdon and McCutcheon:[23]

/This selection gives the background to the skirmish and concludes that the British easily routed the small force of Americans at Lexington./

3. The Making of Modern America by Canfield and Wilder:[24]

/This selection also gives background to the conflict in Lexington, indicates that the minutemen tried to halt the British, but were easily dispersed and the British marched on to Concord./

4. A History of the United States by Robert Wade and others:[25]

/This text recounts how the colonial leaders were warned of British plans, how the colonial militia met the British, "shots were exchanged" which left 8 colonists dead or dying and the British moved on to Concord. The consequences of this incident are then discussed./

5. In The American Achievement by R. C. Brown and others:[26]

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[23]H. W. Bragdon and S. P. McCutcheon, The History of a Free People (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1967), 50.

[24]L. H. Canfield and H. B. Wilder, The Making of Modern America (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1958), 96-97.

[25]R. C. Wade et al., A History of the United States (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1966), 89-91.

[26]R. C. Brown, et al., The American Achievement (Silver Burdett Co., Morristown, N. J., 1966), 64.

/This text takes the position that the colonists "stood their ground" when ordered to disperse and "shots were fired." Since the Americans were faced by "superior numbers" they were easily dispersed./

6. Our Nation From Its Creation by Platt and Drummond:[27]

/Platt and Drummond indicate that the colonial captain, realizing the futility of the situation, ordered his men to withdraw, "(b)ut then a shot rang out." They admit that it is not clear who fired the first shot./

7. In Our American Republic by Muzzy and Link:[28]

/Muzzy and Link provide background for the incident, note that Pitcairn ordered the "rebels" to disperse, that a "shot was fired by some unknown soldier," which resulted in a volley from the British./

8. The United States: Story of a Free People by Samuel Steinberg:[29]

/Steinberg notes that the militia was ordered to disperse, but "stood their ground," and the English fired a volley of shots. He concludes that Paul Revere "spread the news of this new atrocity to the neighboring colonies" which aroused them to organized resistance./

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[27]N. Platt and M. J. Drummond, Our Nation From Its Creation (Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1964), 74.

[28]D. S. Muzzy and A. S. Link, Our American Republic (Ginn and Co., Boston, 1963), 78.

[29]Samuel Steinberg, The United States: Story of a Free People (Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston, 1963), 92.

SECTION III

EVERY MAN HIS OWN HISTORIAN?

A. What is a Fact?

Whenever there are problems to be solved, most people seem to feel that a solution can be found if only enough facts can be gathered and dealt with in an intelligent manner. The following readings, however, raise again the problem of what is a fact and call for definition of that term. Surely any historian--Carl Becker says that every man, in some way, functions as at least an amateur historian--must come to some conclusion on this question before he can move on to other matters of the historian's calling.

1. This dictionary definition of a fact presents some intriguing variations:[1]

> /Webster defines a fact as a "deed, act, reality, actuality, truth, actual or alleged incident or condition," or that which is "supposed to be true."/

2. Professor E. H. Dance offers an interesting comment on the factual nature of a long-accepted date:[2]

> /Dance says that history is the record of the past not the past itself and that the recorder is, despite all attempts to be objective, bound to insert his own views and prejudices. He notes that even the citation of dates is open to inaccuracy and describes two mis-statements of fact and one religious prejudice which are implicit in the "familiar formula, 'Battle of Hastings, A.D. 1066.'"/

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[1] Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1953), College Edition, 520.

[2] E. H. Dance, History The Betrayer: A Study in Bias (Hutchinson and Co., London, 1960), 9-10.

3. This excerpt is drawn from a book written by Walter Lippmann in 1922 on stereotypes and their implications.[3]

> [Through numerous and detailed examples Lippman explains how preconceptions can color our observations radically.]

4. Carl Becker speculated on the "what, when and where" of historical facts:[4]

> [Becker speaks of a fact as being a statement of affirmation or symbol which is present in the mind (or nowhere), and that in the mind it takes on a timeless nature. The fact itself only takes on a meaning when the historian imposes meaning on it which implies that the personal equation is unavoidable. He concludes that the "present influences our idea of the past, and our idea of the past influences the present."]

B. Science, Art, and Reality

Part B contains five documents: two physics experiments, a sociological case study, an excerpt from a novel, and a poem. Such readings lend themselves to the consideration of two crucial questions. First, in pursuing his calling, does the historian do anything particularly different from what is done in other disciplines, in this case natural science, social science, fiction and poetry? Secondly, is any one of these disciplines more specifically suited to the pursuit of reality than the others?

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[3]Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1922), 79-83, 87-88.

[4]Carl L. Becker, "What Are Historical Facts," The Western Political Quarterly, VIII (Sept., 1955), 330-333.

1. The following experiment should suggest something about the nature of what might be described as "scientific." For example, in this first experiment how did Newton go about proving the existence of gravity?[5]

> /The steps Newton went through--hypothesis development, repeated experimentation, and repeated verification--in proving the existence of gravity are described. This scientific discovery helped people accept the notion that there were laws of nature and that man could, through scientific procedures, understand them./

2. This second experiment states how to apply the principle of electrostatic induction.[6]

> /It is explained how the Leyden jar is used to demonstrate the principle of electrostatic induction./

3. The selections from David Jenkins' article provide a representative sample of the work and methodology of a social scientist:[7]

> /This selection describes the procedures that are used by a sociologist in analyzing "how social and ethnic groups differ in their perceptions of tuberculosis, and how this difference is associated with varying group experiences with this disease."/

4. The following is a brief excerpt drawn from April Morning, Howard Fast's fictional recreation of the Lexington affair, which might

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[5]Oscar M. Stewart, Physics, A Textbook for Colleges (Ginn and Co., Boston, 1939), 169-170.

[6]Oscar M. Stewart, Physics, A Textbook for Colleges, 410.

[7]C. David Jenkins, "Group Differences in Perception: A Study of Community Beliefs and Feelings About Tuberculosis," American Journal of Sociology, (Jan., 1966), 417-418, 420-422, 427-428.

suggest some generalizations about the work of the novelist.[8]

> /One fictional American Minuteman's feelings, reactions and perceptions at the time of the skirmish on Lexington Green are described in the first person./

5. Herbert Reed's offering provides an opportunity to speculate on the methodology and the degree of success of poetry in capturing reality:[9]

> /The poet describes the physical appearance of the dead children who were bombing casualties in Spain./

C. The Creative Question and Reality

What is "reality:--and how does one reach it? Surely this is a crucial question for all people, including the historian. He must decide if the past is something that he can best reach through exhaustive research, an assimilation of all the facts dealing with any particular matter, or through attempting to formulate creative, organizing questions which will dictate more selective directions in which his research will take him.

1. Professor Herbert Butterfield comments on the degree to which he thought a historian should intentionally interact with his materials:[10]

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[8]Howard Fast, April Morning (Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 1961), 91-97.

[9]J. Heath-Stubbs and D. Wright, eds., The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Verse (Faber and Faber, London, 1953), 278-279.

[10]Herbert Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1951), 90-93.

/Butterfield makes a plea for "a creative act of the historical imagination" that allows the historian to be more than a passionless transcriber of information. He asserts that the historian goes to the past for its significances which makes it necessary that he go with "instinct and sympathy alive and all our humanity awake."/

2. Barbara Tuckman, a popular modern historian, identifies what she regarded as several important aids to a historian in his pursuit of reality:[11]

/Tuckman contends that intuition, imagination and empathy are invaluable aids to the historian./

3. Professor Butterfield points at what he thinks could be a pitfall in approaching historical evidence:[12]

/Butterfield warns that the "whig interpretation of history"--in which the past is studied with reference to the present--is prone to cause misunderstandings of the unique characteristics of past periods. Butterfield argues that the main purpose of the historian is to elucidate "the unlikenesses between past and present" not "stress and magnify the similarities."/

4. Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," a chapter in The Republic, still offers a classic example of inquiry into the whole question of truth and reality:[13]

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[11]Barbara Tuckman, "The Historian's Opportunity," Saturday Review (Feb. 25, 1967), 30, 71.

[12]Herbert Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History, 9-13.

[13]Plato, The Republic, translated with introduction and notes by Francis M. Cornford (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1941), 222-226.

/Plato's famous "Allegory of the Cave" is reprinted. One prisoner among many is released from a cave (in which shadows seemed to be real objects in and of themselves), and he discovers a "different reality" in the "upper world." There is speculation that if he tried to tell the prisoners back in the cave of this reality they would laugh at him, say his sight had been ruined, and if he tried to free them, they would kill him./

APPENDIX

THE PROS AND CONS OF TEXTBOOKS

The two excerpted articles in this appendix join the issue as to whether history textbooks are useful, or even desirable educational instruments. Perhaps you might want to consider some of the questions raised by these articles as you examine the textbook treatment of Lexington in Part II-B of this unit.

1. Peter Schrag, a former college staff member and now an Education writer for Saturday Review, has taken a very strong stand on this issue:[1]

> /Schrag attacks the idea of textbooks because of their neutral, "disembodied" tone, their lack of honest analysis of controversial issues, and their implication that they are official truth. He asserts that "the truth lies in the honesty of the quest."/

2. In the teacher's introduction to a recent text, the editor took this position:[2]

> /In this selection it is claimed that textbooks "need not be . . . abused", though it is admitted that they "can encourage bad teaching." Edwin Fenton says that "the curse can be taken off the textbook by the use of a proper 'attack strategy'" in which questions are asked that "can lead to understanding the basic structure of history and the social sciences."/

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[1]Peter Schrag, "Voices in the Classroom," Saturday Review, (January 21, 1967), 74.

[2]Bragdon and McCutcheon, The History of a Free People, introduction, 5-6.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The name of Allen French dominates the study of the so-called Lexington affair. Two of his books, in particular, are musts for anyone working in this area: The Day of Lexington and Concord (Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1925) and General Gage's Informers (The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1932). In the latter, French presented previously unused British manuscripts which cast a wholly new light on the entire affair.

Arthur Tourtellot's William Diamond's Drum (Hutchinson, London, 1960) does an excellent job of reviewing and synthecizing the scholarly work on the subject, presenting an extensive bibliography and making some very interesting suggestions as to the possible roles played by the Reverend Jonas Clark and by Sam Adams. On a less detailed level, Chapter IX, ". . . a grait many Lay dead and the Road was bloody" in From Lexington to Liberty by Bruce Lancaster (Doubleday and Co., Inc., Garden City, N.Y., 1955) does an excellent job of evaluating much of the conflicting evidence bearing on this event. Mr. Tourtellot also has an interesting chapter in the American Heritage magazine (Aug., 1959), "Harold Murdock's 'The Nineteenth of April, 1775,'" in which he introduces and comments upon a provocative study from the early Twentieth Century.

For those who wish to dig back into primary sources, Peter Force edited a splendid collection of materials in his American Archives (Clarke and Force, Washington, D.C., 1939), Fourth Series, Vol. II. And a fascinating case study of local pride and prejudice can be found by reading Ezra Ripley, A History of the Fight at Concord (Herman Atwill,

Concord, 1832) and Elias Phinney, History of the Battle at Lexington (Phelps and Farnham, Boston, 1825).

A good introduction to the evolutions of historiography is available in Fritz Stearn's The Varieties of History* (Meridan Books, New York, 1956). In the allied study of the philosophy of history, two essays by Carl Becker have become classics: Everyman His Own Historian (Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1935) and "What Are Historical Facts," in Han Meyerhoff's useful anthology, The Philosophy of History in Our Time* (Doubleday and Co., Inc., Garden City, N. Y., 1959). One other useful introduction to the philosophy of history is Carl Gustavson's A Preface to History* (McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1955). Two anthologies which deal with the questions on a more sophisticated level are Patrick Gardiner, ed., Theories of History (The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1959) and Sidney Hook, ed., Philosophy and History: A Symposium (New York University Press, N. Y., 1963).

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*Available in paperback edition.